A FARMER'S TALK TO FARMERS

The Castle of If—The French Castle of this Name Not the Only One—Every Town has a Few—To the Snorters and Snivellers Must be Added the If-But-ers—The Impediments of the Mind—The Castle of Biff the Source of Vim.

(Written Specially for The Bulletin.)

I suppose you've all of you heard or read of the Castle of If, near Marseilles, France. Only the Frenchmen call it the "Castle d'If," which I understand they have the indubitable right to, as they built it and it belongs to them. If a man can't call the thing he makes by the name he chooses what's the good of the constitution and the Declaration of Independence, anyway? But, while I freely admit their right to say "Shattow deef," if they want to, horses and oxen can't make me call it anything but "the Castle of If."

It has been a notable prison, and many famous names, historical as well as Dumas-invented, are represented on the roster of its involuntary guest-book. Standing on a rocky island, surrounded by the deep waters of the bay of Marseilles, it has always been considered a mighty hard place to get out of. People confined there could wander around the corridors or stand on the towers and gaze longingly towards the vine-clad hills of the blue shore, without much chance of getting away. They didn't wear shackles and chains, didn't have to be confined in burglar-proof cells. A visitor might hardly distinguish the prisoner from the guard by any outward mark. Yet around those picturesque roofs the unscalable air and the unswimable gulf set barriers more impassable than triple walls of steel and concrete.

But you don't have to go to Marseilles to find another "Castle of If." I've got a farmer neighbor who lives in one, not a mile from me. It doesn't look in the least little bit like a castle or a prison. It hasn't any towers nor any thick walls with barred windows. Nor is there the slightest trace of a moat around it. It looks, for all the world, like a common, everyday farmhouse—a little time-worn, perhaps; out-at-the-heels, as one might say; a trifle discouraged, if such a word may be applied to a mere building. But it's not dilapidated nor really forbidding. There's nothing about it to draw the special attention of the casual passer.

Yet, if ever there was a "Castle of If," it is this farmhouse. There's an "If" standing guard forever at the front door, and another, even bigger, watching at the rear. One sits down to dinner with the family regularly, and one roosts on the headboard of the masters' bed each night. There's another out at the barn sitting on the haymow and a little one lies always between the plow handles. It's "If" here and "If" there. "If it would only"——; "If it only wouldn't"——

"If" it hadn't been for the weather, he'd have plowed that back lot last spring and got a good crop of potatoes. "If" the mowing machine hadn't been broken, he'd have got that hay in from the east meadow without its having been soaked and spoiled by the rain. "If" he'd only known how high eggs were going to be, he'd have saved those pullets that went into the pot last summer and had eggs to sell now. "If" he could only get some shingles as good as he used to buy fifty years ago, he'd shingle the barn and stop its leaking. "If" he only had a thousand dollars more, he would buy that adjoining lot, hire an extra man and do wonders next year. "If" the town would only straighten the road, fill in the swamp, bore a short tunnel through the hill the road now goes over, why, then he could draw bigger loads to market and perhaps make something. "If" his neighbors would only keep up their line fences better, then he'd fix his, too. "If" somebody else would only do something different, then everything would be lovely.

Oh, yes, and if turnips grew already boiled and buttered, he wouldn't have to store 'em and have 'em cooked. If pumpkin pies hung on trees he could get his lunch very easily. If the brooks ran milk he wouldn't have to keep cows, and if little roast pigs roamed around begging him to slice 'em up and eat 'em, he wouldn't need a pigpen. If it rained automobiles and aeroplanes he could get to town regardless of roads—if he didn't blow up or break his neck starting. If there wasn't any winter it would be summer all the year—or something else. If the world was only different, why, then, it would be a different world. Oh, shucks!

Some poet once said that

"In the bright lexicon of youth
There's no such word as 'fail.'"

Perhaps not; I don't know. I've got out of that "bright lexicon" into one that's a little more cloudy, at times, and less certain in its definitions. Nevertheless I wish there wasn't such a word as "if" in any lexicon, nor such a thing in life as seems to be implied by the word. I wish there wasn't any "Castle of If," with its big "Ifs" for jailers and its little "Ifs" for constant companions. But there are lots of them. My neighbor isn't the only one who lives in that sort of prison. Similar "If" houses stand in every country town and along every highway. The worst of it is that they won't keep their "If" broods at home, but send them out to infect the whole countryside. Such places seem to radiate gloom and discontent, as more cheerful and sweeter tempered Nature radiates sunlight and warmth.

To the two classes I talked about, last week, please add another—the "If-But"-ers. You know the formula: "If things were so and so, I'd win. But since they are otherwise, I lose. When people once get fairly settled in any old Castle of If, their daily life and conversation thenceforth becomes a succession of "Ifs" and "Buts."

Now—what—is the use? Of course if I were always 25, my old back and legs wouldn't get tired so quickly as they do at 55. If I were 11 feet high, with four arms and hands, and eyes in the back of my head as well as the front, I could do four times as much work as now—and about eight times as much as any of the doddering dabsters I can hire. Just think, however, of the amount of pork, pie and potatoes it would take to keep such a critter!

Anyway, I'm not 25 and I never shall be again. I'm not able to do four men's work, and I never shall be. We all are what we are, and we're in a world which is what it is. The old brand of pietists used to parrot forth the assertion that "Whatever is, is right." Which means—if it means anything—that everything is just as it should be. Now we all know better than that. Things are not just as they should be and people are not just as they should be. Our whole life is devoted, in society, in politics, in the church, to trying to improve things and folks and make 'em better. Which would be just blithering idiocy if we really believed that all things and everybody were just as they should be. No, indeed; there's plenty of room for criticism and plenty of room for betterment, all 'round. But, while it is our bounden duty to try to smooth up the old world, so far as our sandpaper will reach, it is also our bounden duty to make the best of that which we can't change.

Are you quite sure in your own mind that the world is a bad job? Then make the best of it! Grit your teeth, spit on your hands, take a fresh hold and just—everlastingly—pull, till something starts! You probably won't be able to pull Lantern Hill off the face of the landscape, but you may, possibly, be able to pull a stook of cornstalks into the barn, or a stick of cordwood home for a kitchen fire, or a loose rock out of the highway. "If" you were only rich, you'd do wonders. "If" you were only president, you'd reform everything. But you're not rich, and you're not president, and you aren't asked to reform everything all in a minute, or do any other wonders. To few, indeed, ever come opportunities for doing great things. The most of us must be content with doing little things all our lives, doing them and then doing them over again. We're poor servants—worse than that, we're unworthy workmen, when we scant and neglect our little duties because of their triviality. If it is not given to us to remove mountains, we can at least hoe corn. Moreover, when some pesky little "If" pops up beside the row we're finding it so hard to hoe, we can put a trifle more ginger into our work and hoe Mr. "If" under the first hill—to help fertilize it.

My neighbor, who has inspired these reflections, is really a pretty good sort, at bottom. Once in a while he gets out of bed feet foremost and starts into the morning with a genuine man' look on his face. Those are the days when you can't find an "If" around his place. The creatures know when they meet their master and hunt their holes instanter. Why can't he keep up that spirit all the time? His "Chateau d'If" would soon change into a "Castle of Biff," suggestive of the way in which he met difficulties, and swatted them into quiescence.

THE FARMER.

LETTERS FROM TWO STATES.

WASHINGTON COUNTY, R. I.

RICHMOND

Social and Personal Items.

The New Movement Bible class connected with the Shannock Sunday school served an oyster supper in the evstry Friday evening.

Mrs. Albert Hoyle is the guest of friends in Peacdale.

Miss Florence Milner spent Sunday with Miss Mertie Handell at Hope Valley.

Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Dawley, Archie Dawley, from Kenyon, Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Moore and son, Andrew, and Miss Mabel Kirby from Westport, Mass., spent Monday evening with the Rev. Warren Dawley and family.

Mrs. Lucy Dawley, who has been speding a few days with her aunt, Mrs. Frank Rice, in Westerly, has returned home.

Miss Edna Dawley spent last week with friends in Wakefield.

Miss Mary L. Hoxie made a trip to Westerly Tuesday.

The Philathea and Baraca and Bible classes connected with the Shannock Sunday school met at the parsonage on Wednesday evening.

Nathaniel Hendrick is employed in the express office in Providence.

ROCKVILLE

Silver Baking Dish Wedding Gift to Mr. and Mrs. Irish.

About a dozen of the young people of this place called on Mr. and Mrs. Carlton Irish Wednesday evening, leaving them a beautiful silver baking dish as a wedding gift. Mr. and Mrs. Irish were recently married and have this week commenced keeping house.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lanphear of Westerly were recent guests of relatives here.

Emory C. Kenyon has been laid up a week through injuries caused by being kicked by a horse.

Clarence Kenyon of Providence was at his home here Tuesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Kenyon have been visiting friends at Westerly and New London.

Mrs. Osmas Edwards and daughter Gladys and Mrs. Harold Crandall went to Westerly Monday.

ARCADIA

Rumored Sale of Arcadia Mills.

William E. Briggs came home from Newport, R. I. to use the privilege of elective franchise.

John H. Gardiner, who lives near Four Corners church, has sold his farm to E. M. Tillinghast.

Mrs. Henry Mayne and Miss Etta Woodmansee were guests of Mrs. O. P. Bates one day recently.

Edward C. Thornley is working on the highway that is being macadamized in Richmond, R. I.

Mrs. L. M. Barber has been visiting relatives and friends in Providence during the past week.

Rumor has it that E. M. Tillinghast has sold the Arcadia mills estate.

Pinchot's Fame.

Mr. Pinchot seems to have earned the appelation of Noble White Man of the Forest.—Anaconda Standard.

Some Glory. After All.

Anyhow, Peary and Cook had Colonel Roosevelt stymie for a time.—Washington Post.

WAS DRUMMER IN FAMOUS BANDS.

John L. Miller of Providence Had Been Connected with Reeves' American Band and Other Organizations.

John L. Miller, one of the prominent musicians of Providence, and for the past twenty-five years connected with Reeves' American band, died at the Rhode Island hospital Tuesday of Bright's disease. He was in his 49th year. Mr. Miller was born in Providence June 6, 1861, the son of John and Susan Miller, and went to the public schools. When only ten years old he was drummer boy in the old National band. When a young man he became a member of of the noted Reeves American band and continued with that organization until the formation of Clarke's band. He was a protege and a particular friend of the late bandmaster, D. Wallis Reeves. Mr. Miller went with the new organization as manager, but after a brief existence, Clarke's band disbanded and he went into Fay's Second Regiment band. When Edward M. Fay took over the American band, Mr. Miller continued with Mr. Fay and remained with him to the time of his death. A few years ago he started to manufacture drums and met with considerable success in that line. He was a member of the Musicians' union and the Theatrical Mechanics' association. A widow and children survive Mr. Miller.

A Complaint from Mexico.

It appears from the excited comment of some of the newspapers of Mexico that the president set an example of Jeffersonian simplicity on the occasion of his recent meeting with President Diaz for which he is to be cordially commended.

The complaint of the editor of El-Keskabel, published in Guadalajara, is almost as bitter as that of the English emissary who was met by President Jefferson clad in dressing gown and slippers run down at the heel:

"Remembering the excursion of the white squadron through all the seas, an excursion that cost millions of dollars, and was solely an extravagant ostentation to acquant the world of the wealth of the Yankee, I had hoped that the executive Taft would bring to the frontier a regiment of soldiers splendidly dressed, a good battery of artillery and a resplendent staff. But no, senors; there was indeed a sad contrast.

"While our president went adorned in his grand uniform of a general, made in Paris at a cost of 25,000 francs, President Taft wore a suit that did not seem to be his own, due to its looseness. His collar was wilted by perspiration, and there was not the slightest impression of elegance. He went in a coach (it might have been a public hire), while our preside rode in a splendid landau, and the soldiers, the Mexicans, were in gala dress, with well polished boots and well brushed clothes. Those of our neighbor were in leggins, yellow shoes, khaki clothes, and, what is the worst of all, "undershirt."

"How shall this American negligee be interpreted? Was it to make evident the freedom of the Yankee? Was it to contrast the simplicity of the opulent with the splendor of the poor? Or might it not have been to signify the little importance that they conceded to the ceremony?"

It may be admitted that there is an element of inconsistency in sending a fleet about the world at an expense that has never yet been fairly admitted to the tax paying public, merely for display, and then escorting the president of the United States in civilian's dress and with wilted collar to do the honors to a neighboring republic where the gold braid and tinsel is not all given over to the army and navy. That a Mexican should not understand is not at all surprising.

But the inconsistency will not be viewed on this side of the Mexican border as it is on the other, for on this side the president will not be discredited because of a wilted collar. He appeared as an American citizen, no more impervious to the rays of a Mexican summer sun than any other American, to convey the good will of a plain people to their neighbors—a friendly service, best performed with democratic simplicity—Des Moines Register and Leader.

Valets for Students.

Undergraduates who entered the office at Yale university this week were met with the conspicuously posted sign: "No private servants are allowed in the college buildings." Yale has always been opposed to valets, but to the western collegian it must seem strange that these luxurious impedimenta shold have to be formally barred from the campus. Such a prohibition would sound like boisterous farce at Illinois, and it would be little short of a riot call at Wisconsin. But it is a more serious matter in the sophisticated east, and there are graduates of Harvard today who wish that Yale's signboard could have been posted, in the magnificent dormitories at Cambridge a decade ago. Body servants are not needed at our universities. A little more intellectual valeting is the tonic being prescribed by every academic practitioner from President Lowell down.—Chicago Evening Post.

Dr. Cook's "At Last."

Whether it is sad or funny, we cannot easily determine. But a newspaper editor has dug out of Dr. Cook's book about the ascent of Mt. McKinley this interesting paragraph:

"At last! The soul-stirring task was crowned with victory. The top of the continent was under our feet. Our hands clasped, but not a word was uttered. We felt like shouting, but we had not the breath to spare. The thing that impressed me first was the noble character of Edward Barrill, the bigness in heart and soul of the man who followed me without a word of complaint, through hopelessness to success."

Evidently Dr. Cook had not scaled all the cliffs and crags of human nature, even if he had reached the summit of this lofty peak. As he stood there, clasping the hand of Edward Barrill, he had no premonition that the big-hearted guide would swear to a circumstantial denial of the whole story, as it was already shaping itself in his mind.—New Bedford Standard.

A Mean Trick.

Some of the automobilists who went through Connecticut on Friday night and Saturday morning to the Vanderbilt race suffered from swollen eyes, lips and faces generally, the result, it is said, of red pepper thrown in the streets of some of the towns passed through. This was a decidedly mean trick, and it would be well to know what towns harbored persons engaged in such an outrage. Several of those who suffered from this cause went back from the race by rail and their faces showed plainly the results of their injuries.—Bridgeport Standard.

Keen Competition.

A member of the Roosevelt hunting expedition has undertaken the ascent of Mount Kenia, which thereby threatens to become the Mount Mckinley of Africa. — New Orleans Times-Democrat.

In one year the number of taxicabs in London has more than doubled, and the horse-drawn cab will probably soon be extinct.

Loss of the America's Cup.

There will be a good deal of popular sympathy in this country with Sir Thomas Lipton's wish to lessen the obstacles in the way of another challenge for the America's cup. Whether the New York Yacht club will see its way clear to modify the terms on which it holds the cup remains to be seen, but that organization is, to some extent, committed to the policy of encouraging the building of boats fit to cross the ocean. In 1902 it adopted a rule designed to favor cruising yachts, as distinguished from racers, pure and simple. It would make only a new application of that principle if it felt free to construe the deed of gift under which it received the America's cup so as to lead Sir Thomas to make another trial.

That the club has had misgivings as to the result of another international race would be an unfair assumption, but the loss of the cup would not be a tragedy. The effort to recover it would furnish a new incentive for competition between American and foreign yacht designers.—N. Y. Tribune.

A Hog Milt Proprecy.

Prognostications of a hard and cold winter "don't go" with Farmer C. F. Bennett of West Cheshire, this state, who pooh poohs the goosebone, the thick cornhusk, the chipmunk's thick fur, the caterpillar's black stripes and all the other time-honored and weather beaten signs and symbols, and pins his faith to the "hog's milt," or spleen.

In writing his annual hog milt prognostication to the World, Farmer Bennett says:

"My predictions are as follows: A late fall. I look for the month of November to be warmer than October. I dont' look for any winter weather until well up in December. I don't look for much snow or ice. I don't look for any ice until after the first of January. The milt indicates the cool weather we have had the last two weeks. I look for a reasonably early spring."

Farmer Bennett, with his hog's milt, is in the minority, but it is to be hoped he's right.—Hartford Post.

Can't Ignore Fowler.

Congressman Fowler's challenge to Senator Aldrich for a joint debate on the central bank plan will not be formally accepted, it is safe to say. Informally it will be accpeted, as Congressman Fowler knows, and the result will be to the alvantage of the country. The New Jersey student of the banking problem cannot be ignored, even by Uncle Joe Cannon. What he has to say about the banking and currency system will be worth hearing, and the members of the currency commission who realize that there must be a reasonable approval and acceptance of any plan of reform that is to become successful will realize that what Congressman Fowler says will be worth answering and carefully considering. It is essential that there shall be an open debate on the proposed legislation.—Boston Herald.

The Baptist temple in Brooklyn has invited Rev. Dr. Len C. Broughton of the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta, to become its pastor.